

## **Signature Ceremony for US-Nigeria Trade and Investment Framework Agreement**

**Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky  
U.S. Trade Representative**

**The Indian Treaty Room  
Old Executive Office Building  
Washington, D.C.**

**February 16, 2000**

Good afternoon, friends and honored guests.

I am very proud and pleased to be here with Vice President Abubakar and our many distinguished guests, as we sign this landmark Trade and Investment Framework Agreement.

Nigeria is our second largest African trade partner. Over the past decade, though, we have seen little growth in bilateral trade. This is a cause for some regret; but it is also a sign that we have untapped potential. And today, we have the best opportunity in many years to take advantage of that fact.

President Obasanjo and Vice President Abubakar have set in motion a remarkable and courageous program of democratization, economic reform and opening to the world. Our Administration supports and applauds this work. And the Trade and Investment Framework we sign today is both a sign of our confidence in the reform initiative; and a practical, mutually beneficial means of helping it succeed.

With the stronger trade and investment relationship this agreement helps to create, we can give new opportunities to Nigeria's farmers, artisans and industries in the American market.

We can do the same for America's businesses and working people as Nigeria rebuilds its industrial infrastructure.

And we can identify shared interests and goals at the WTO, building upon the proposal we have already made together to reform the WTO's technical assistance and capacity-building programs for the least developed countries. One milestone in the near future will be our sponsoring, together with USAID of a WTO Workshop for Nigerian officials.

The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement will help us in all these areas. It will create the legal and institutional foundation for a permanent trade policy dialogue spanning the range of issues before us today. Areas of shared interest and cooperation at the WTO. Agricultural and industrial standards. The development of electronic commerce and Internet capability. Intellectual property rights, which is especially important to both our countries as world leaders in music, film and literature. Customs procedures and trade facilitation, investment

promotion, and much more as well.

And as we address these practical and concrete issues, we will also take a step of great symbolic consequence for Africa and for the world.

As Africa's largest nation and most richly endowed economy, Nigeria's success is crucial to the success of Africa as a whole. Our recognition of this, and our commitment to the success of the reform effort, is absolutely clear in the State Department's designation of Nigeria as a priority country for our diplomacy this year.

And it is clear in this agreement as well. A strong partnership between our two countries is absolutely fundamental to our hopes not only for bilateral relations, but for a broader and closer relationship with all of Africa in this new century. This is already clear in the strong support and momentum the Vice President and President Obasanjo have given to the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Our agreement today will help us deepen that partnership. And thus it will help us advance together towards the future of peace, prosperity and development which all of us hope to see; and which the voters of Nigeria and the United States have asked our Administrations to help create.

Mr. Vice President, honored guests, I thank you all for coming to this ceremony today. And I look forward to a relationship that grows and deepens every year.